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ABSTRACT

Entrance into the teaching profession is often a situation of disappointment or "reality shock." As shown by previous researchers, teacher burnout is higher in the beginning of the career. Among the causes are inadequate initial teacher training and the lack of initial motivation. In order to study this phenomenon, the transition of 214 teachers from training in the university to the professional world was analyzed and some ways of intervention to prevent or to solve this problem were proposed. Analysis of study data suggested that initial teacher training should follow a relational model, capable of identifying and developing the personal skills relevant to an effective and personalized occupational practice. In the educational training prior to the beginning of the occupational practice, this model should clarify implicit theories and irrational beliefs and promote the formation of realistic expectations about teaching. The training should stimulate frequent problem-solving and decision-making simulation exercises. In addition, the training supervision should be able to promote the learning processes and career development of the new teacher via cognitive, emotional, and behavioral support. Six strategies for vocational guidance and counseling during higher education are suggested. (Contains 36 references.) (ND)

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THE "REALITY SCHOCK" OF THE BEGINNING TEACHERS

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Maria Paula Paixão

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THE "REALITY SCHOCK" OF THE BEGINNING TEACHERS*

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The entrance in the profession of teacher is often a situation of disapointment or "reality schock". As showed by previous researches, teacher burnout is higher in the beginning of the career.

Among the factors of this situation, there are the inadequate initial teacher training and the lack of initial motivation for the profession of teacher.

This paper analyses this situation of transition from the training in the university to the professional world, in the case of teachers. Furthermore, it tries to propose some ways of intervention to prevent or to solve this problem, and that through an adequate vocational counseling of preservice and beginning teachers.

INTRODUCTION

The deep social and educational changes that have occurred in the so-called industrialized societies have had a great impact on the occupational motivation of people.

The massification of teaching, the development of the media, the number of alternatives offered by industrialized societies, the high unemployement rates and the uncertainty of the occupational path are some of the main factors that have contributed to the "motivational crisis" in present society (Lévy-Leboyer, 1994), this meaning a decrease in the value of work in human activities, mainly in the process of personal identity construction, a situation that seems to affect mostly the youngsters.

On the other side, teachers seem to be the professionals most affected by the changes that have taken place, as is shown by the lack of motivation for this profession. In a research carried out with future teachers, only 30,1% of the inquired want to keep teaching throughout their own career (Jesus, 1993), while it is true that about 90% see teaching as their most likely future job.

In addition to the lack of motivation, there are other several signs of teacher burnout, when compared to those presented by subjects in other occupational activities (Amiel, Misrahi, Labarte & Héraud-Bonnaure, 1986; Esteve, 1992; Punch & Tuettemann, 1990; Travers & Cooper, 1993).

Low job satisfaction is one of burnout's most visible signs. In a research carried out by Prick (1989), involving the participation of several thousands of subjects, dutch ex-teachers and teachers from several other european countries, in all the age ranges considered dutch teachers show a lower job satisfaction than ex-teachers in their current job. This research did also reveal that in every age group considered portuguese teachers display a lower job satisfaction than the other teachers involved (see table 1).

The data points out to the fact that portuguese teachers in the early stages of their career present the highest low job satisfaction value, a clear sign of burnout .

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Table 1: Means obtained by ex-teachers and teachers from several european countries when answering (in a 5-point scale) the question "I am very satisfied with my profession?" (adapted from Prick, 1989).

	< 35 years	35-45 years	> 45 years
Ex-dutch teachers	3.9	3.7	4.1
Dutch teachers	3.5	3.4	3.3
Austrian teachers	3.9	3.9	4.0
Belgian teachers	3.4	3.2	3.3
German teachers	3.6	3.6	3.6
Spanish teachers	3.4	3.5	3.5
Portuguese teachers	3.1	3.2	3.3

Other researches have also concluded that the early stages of the teaching career are eventually the most susceptible ones. For instance, it was shown that it is during this phase that teachers present a higher degree of emotional exhaustion (Anderson & Iwanicki, 1984; Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982). Besides, it is also during this phase that most teachers give up their job (Veenman, 1984; Sweeney, 1991), with 15% leaving in their first year of practice and 35% during the first four years (Mark & Anderson, 1985; Schlechty & Vance, 1983).

The research reported by Veenman (1984), where he proceeds to a meta-analysis of 83 empirical studies carried out with teachers with more than three years of practice and published between 1960-84, constitutes a main reference in this field. This analysis allowed him to pick up the eight more frequent problems felt by teachers, six of them concerning their relation with the students, troubled by disfunctional motivational and discipline factors.

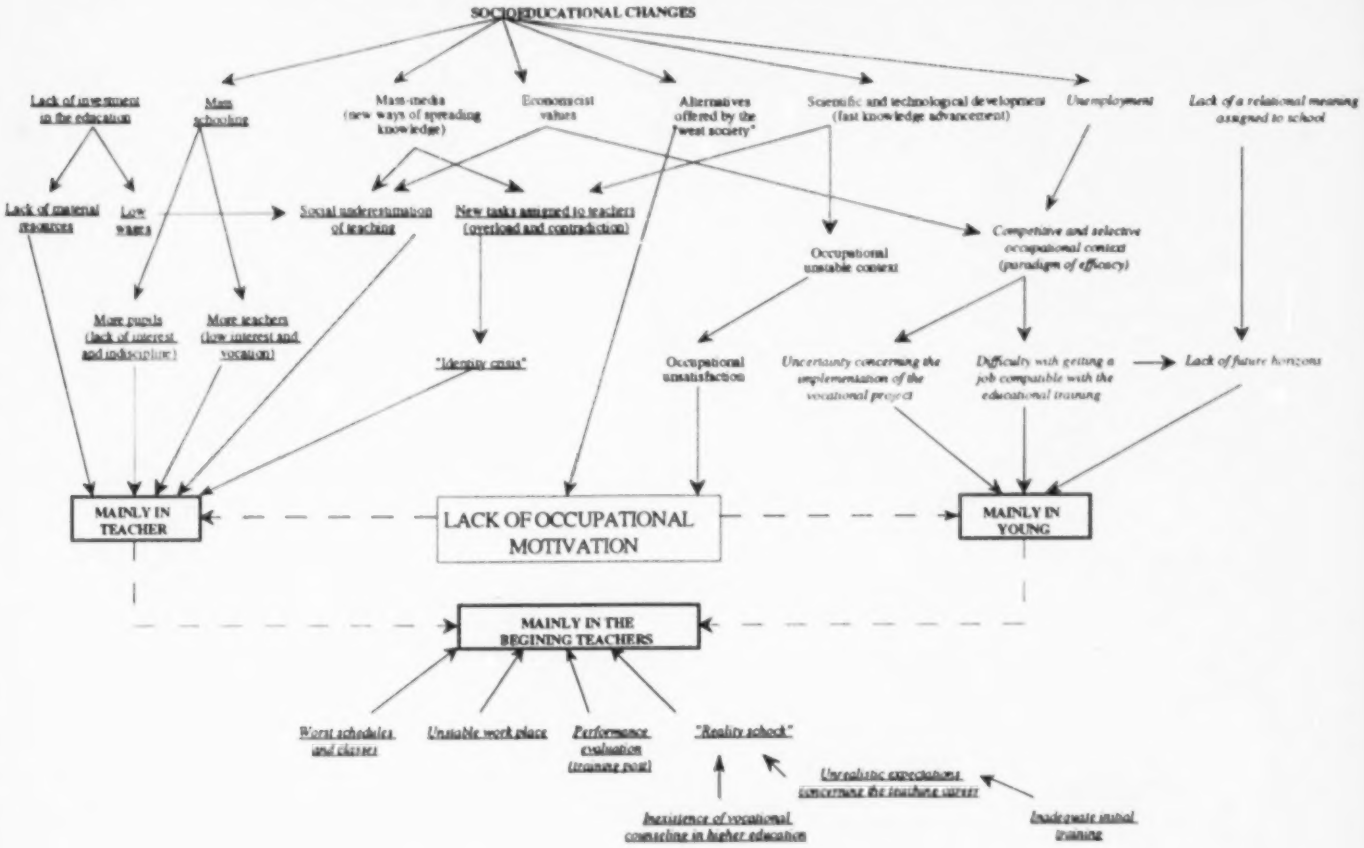
Other more restricted researches have identified more specific problems pointed out by beginning teachers, such as bad work schedules, very difficult classes, as well as the career placing system that forces beginning teachers to move frequently from school to school, from place to place, all of which impact negatively on their occupational adaptation and on their family and social life (Cruz, Dias, Sanches, Ruivo, Pereira & Tavares, 1988; Cavaco, 1991; Esteve, 1992). Besides, the evaluation context lived by the training teacher constitutes one of the main factors contributing to the teacher burnout at this early stage of the occupational career (Hart, 1987).

Another factor also frequently referred to by several authors concerns the lack of preparation given by teachers' initial training programmes, which difficults coping with the working demands. In fact, this initial training promotes both unrealistic expectations and an idealized image of what a good teacher must "be" or "do", but doesn't prepare future teachers to cope with the obstacles and difficulties arousing in real working situations (Bayer, 1984; Gruwez, 1983; Honeyford, 1982; Martinez, 1984; Ryan, 1979; Vila, 1988a; Vonk, 1983).

Although affecting basic school and secondary school teachers in every career stage, burnout and lack of motivation are more prevalent in early career stages because they reflect both the problems lived by the youngsters in our current society and the specific problems arising in the beginning of the teaching career and not only the factors that seem to affect teachers in general.

In an effort to point out the diversity of factors that can contribute to the lack of motivation felt by beginning teachers, we present in figure 1 a synthetic schema illustrating this complex situation.

Figure 1: Relations between several factors contributing to the lack of motivation felt by beginning teachers.


SOCIOEDUCATIONAL CHANGES
Lack of investment in the education
Mass schooling
Mass-media (new ways of spreading knowledge)
Economicist values
Alternatives offered by the "west society"
Scientific and technological development (fast knowledge advancement)
Unemployment
Lack of a relational meaning assigned to school
Lack of material resources
Low wages
Social underestimation of teaching
New tasks assigned to teachers (overload and contradiction)
Occupational unstable context
Competitive and selective occupational context (paradigm of efficacy)
More pupils (lack of interest and indiscipline)
More teachers (low interest and vocation)
"Identity crisis"
Occupational unsatisfaction
Uncertainty concerning the implementation of the vocational project
Difficulty with getting a job compatible with the educational training
Lack of future horizons
MAINLY IN TEACHER
LACK OF OCCUPATIONAL MOTIVATION
MAINLY IN YOUNG
MAINLY IN THE BEGINING TEACHERS
Worst schedules and classes
Unstable work place
Performance evaluation (training year)
"Reality schock"
Unrealistic expectations concerning the teaching career
Inexistence of vocational counseling in higher education
Inadequate initial training

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The concept of "reality schock" has been used to describe teachers "burnout" in the early career stages. This concept was first used by Kramer (1974) when he tried to characterize the discrepancy between beginning teachers' expectancies and their working reality. Its use was later expanded to the analysis of the phenomena appearing in the early career stages (Veenmam, 1984; Vila, 1988a; Vonk, 1983), when new teachers face the "bleak" school reality and doubt the "missionary ideals" developped during their initial training. Thus, the concept of "reality schock" translates the discrepancy between unrealistic career expectations formed during teachers' initial training and their understanding of the real tasks performed in a classroom. This situation calls in question teachers' sense of competence and gives rise to an "identity crisis" (Cole, 1985), "teaching crisis" (Vila, 1988b), "occupational self-concept crisis" (Esteve, 1995) or a need of "survival" (Huberman, 1989).

Veenman (1984, 143) states that "the transition from teacher training to the first teaching job could be a dramatic and traumatic one". According to Walter research (1974, *in* Esteve, 1992), during their first teaching year 91% of teachers must revise the expectancies developped during their initial training.

This problem is clearly situated in the transition from higher education to the occupational life, a developmental context addressed by vocational counseling in this educational level.

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Nevertheless, although "reality schock" in the early career stages has been identified and studied by several authors, current research has limited its focus to a single moment or to the retrospective analysis of the career beginning of teachers with several years of occupational practice.

This is the case of Huberman (1989), who used a biographical methodology to distinguish between three motivational patterns characterizing the early career stages (discovery; survival; indifference). No longitudinal study designed to analyse these patterns' development has yet been carried out, although Martin's research (1989) has basically adopted this methodological design. This author focused on the development of efficacy feelings and assessed this variable in three time moments: in the beginning of the educational training of future teachers (n=57), in the end of this initial training (n=46) and in the end of their first year of occupational practice (n=35). He concluded that the efficacy feelings decrease in the third evaluation moment, which is a sign of occupational disappointment.

The present research has the following main goals:

. not only the efficacy feelings but also other cognitive-motivational variables will be assessed, as we follow an integrative model of the contributions given by isolated cognitive motivational theories;

. the assessment of the cognitive motivational variables will be carried out before the beginning of actual practice and in the end of the first year of the occupational practice, allowing to grasp the several paths that can be traced in the early career stages;

. the impact that both work motivation prior to the beginning of the career path and the occupational learning situations (educational training, support received in the training post and the results obtained) might on the cognitive-motivational variables will also be assessed.

METHODOLOGY

SUBJECTS AND GENERAL PROCEEDING

The initial group was constituted by 214 teachers in training post situation in several basic and secondary schools of the central region of Portugal.164 subjects collaborated in the second testing moment but only 149 of them followed the correct procedures. Their age is situated between 21 and 53 years (M=25,6); 117 are females and 32 males. 102 individuals teach humanities' subjects and 47 scientific subjects.

The tests were sent to 67 training supervisors that cooperated with this research project by administrating the instruments to their supervisees (voluntary) and mailing them to us between October 1993 and June 1994.

In the first test administration we assessed the occupational project, the value of goals, efficacy feelings concerning personal success, result control expectancy, intrinsic motivation and success and failure attributions in the dimensions of *locus* and stability. In the second test administration we assessed previous motivation, the model of educational training, the support received during the training post and the occupational results obtained.

THE INSTRUMENTS

We constructed the following psychological instruments in order to assess the cognitive-motivational identified by the most important cognitive motivational theories: the occupational project (Nuttin's Relational Theory), intrinsic motivation (Deci's Intrinsic Motivation Theory), the value of occupational goals and the success expectancy concerning their realization (Expectancy-Value Models), self-efficacy feelings (Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory), results' control expectancy (Rotter's Social Learning Theory) and the causal attributions concerning successes and failures (Weiner's Causal Attribution Theory).

Besides, we also assessed previous teaching career motivation, the model of vocational training, the support received during the training post and the work results obtained by teachers during their first year of occupational practice.

The scales constructed to assess each one of the variables were submitted to a process of item analysis and selection, considering each item's correlational value with social desirability and the global scale result, and also to an internal consistency analysis.

Examples of items used to assess the variables previously referred (in order to obtain more informations cf. Jesus, 1995a):

. To assess the occupational project: "What occupation would you like to devote to? (right now/within five years:_____)";

. To assess intrinsic motivation: "teaching classes gives me a sense of self-realization" and "I feel very satisfied when I teach classes" (we used a 7 point format, from 1=I totally disagree to 7=I totally agree);

. To assess the value of occupational goals and the related success expectancy: "to have a good relationship with my pupils" and "get the pupils like the subject I teach" (the value of goals was assessed by beginning each phrase with "As a teacher I think it is very important..." and evaluating each answer with a 5 point scale, from "it's not at all important" to "it's fundamental"; the success expectancy was calculated by putting the subject in two different expectancy situations concerning each one of the goals, "If I commit myself as a teacher I expect" and "If I don't commit myself as a teacher I expect", and evaluating each answer with a 5 point scale, from "I don't expect anything" to "I'm certain");

. To assess the efficacy feelings: "when a pupil expresses difficulty in performing a task, I'm usually able to adapt it to the pupil's level of ability" and "when I really try I succeed, even with those pupils who experience a higher degree of difficulty" (we used a 7 point format, from 1=I totally disagree to 7=I totally agree);

. To assess the result control expectancy (locus of control): "whatever happens in the classroom depends on me" and "in order to be successful in the classroom I need to commit" (we used a 7 point format, from 1=I totally disagree to 7=I totally agree);

. To assess the causal attributions concerning the successes and failures, according to the dimensions of locus and stability: "according to my personal characteristics at the pedagogical level" (internal and stable), "according to my characteristics in certain moments" (internal and unstable), "according to the school's actual work conditions" (external and stable) and "according to chance" (external and unstable) (subjects face two different answer situations: "my successes in the teaching/learning process- for example, concerning pupils' discipline, degree of interest and degree of success- are due to..."; and "my failures in the teaching/learning

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process- for example, concerning pupils' lack of discipline, lack of interest and degree of failure- are due to...") (we used a 7 point format, from 1=I totally disagree to 7=I totally agree);

. To assess previous teaching career motivation: "I feel vocationed to be a teacher" and " the inexistance of other occupational alternatives" (the teacher must point out the influence of each factor in the choice of the teaching career) (we used a 5 point format, from 1=none to 5=a lot of influence);

. To assess the model of educational training: "they defended that there are different potentially effective styles of being a teacher" and "they stressed the pedagogical implications of the contents studied (the items are preceded by the phrase "in general, the teachers reponsible for the educational training ...") (we used a 7 point format, from 1=I totally disagree to 7=I totally agree);

. To assess the degree of support received during the training post: "learning by observing my colleagues teaching classes" and "a high degree of autonomy in the use of creativity and in choosing the strategies to use in the teaching/learning process" (the items are preceded by the phrase "The orientation that was provided to me during my training post favoured...") (we used a 7 point format, from 1=I totally disagree to 7=I totally agree);

. To assess the work results obtained by teachers during their first year of occupational practice: (each teacher was due to point out the degree of success obtained in each of the occupational goals - exactly the same that we used to assess the value of goals and related success expectancies) (we used a 5 point format, from 1=unsuccessful to 5=successful).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to analyse the degree of significance of the changes that occurred in the cognitive-motivational variables between the two evaluation moments we used the paired samples "t" test .

Table 2: Means obtained in the cognitive-motivational variables, in the beginning and in the end of the school year, and degree of significance of the differences obtained through the paired samples "t" test.

	M (1ª)	M (2ª)	Dif. M
Occupational project	4.523	4.060	-.463***
Intrinsic motivation	22.940	21.591	-1.349***
Value of goals	30.799	29.879	-.919***
Success expectancy	16.336	15.188	-1.148
Efficacy feelings	30.134	29.302	-.832
Control expectancy	45.490	42.846	-2.644***
Attribution-success/locus	25.812	21.409	-1.403***
Attribution-failure/locus	17.846	15.027	-2.819***
Attribution-success/stability	16.631	15.517	-1.114***
Attribution-failure/stability	12.315	10.906	-1.409**

**p<.01; ***p<.001

There is a significant decrease in the orientation to teaching within the occupational project during the training post period, a situation that translates the "reality schock", that is, disappoitment with the occupation and a corresponding desire to change.

Globally, there is a significant decrease in all the cognitive-motivational variables previously mentioned, except the efficacy feelings and the occupational success expectancies where the decrease is, nevertheless, almost significant (p=.0572 e p=.0507).

This decrease reveals that the initial desire to become a teacher was substituded by a desire to give up this occupation subsequent to the "reality schock". The decrease in the control, efficacy and success expectancies translate disappointment, probably because the initial expectancies, formed during the educational training, were too high or unrealistic and also because the training post failure experiences (in a context of lack of psychological support) questioned the sense of competence and the occupational vocation of the prospective teacher. Simultaneously, the changes that occurred in the prospective teachers' attributions to success and failure show a decrease in the internal and stable factors, a situation which may have two possible explanations: either the acceptance that the work results depend upon several and complex factors impacting on the teaching/learning process, or a lack of commitment towards occupational tasks and associated results, empowering routine and inhibition behaviors that characterize many disillusioned teachers. The decrease in the intrinsic motivation to the performance of the occupational tasks and in the value of goals seem to reinforce the latter explanation.

We also tried to evaluate the implications that both the initial motivation and the occupational training and experience have on the several cognitive-motivational variables. Thus, we performed a predictor-criterion type of analysis via simple regression equations, in which we considered the initial motivation and the model of educational training as the predictor variables and the support received during the training post and the correspondent work results as the criterion ones. As a function of this design, we used the data obtained in the second testing administration (cf. table 3).

Table 3: Beta coefficients obtained via simple regression equations.

	Predictor variables			
	Initial motivation	Educational training models	Support in training post	Results in teaching
Occupational project	.621***	-.005	.124	.179*
Intrinsic motivation	.556***	.027	.280***	.382***
Value of goals	.247**	.082	.365***	.496***
Success expectancy	.169*	-.040	.240**	.227**
Efficacy feelings	.177*	.125	.215**	.356***
Control expectancy	.181*	.116	.281***	.250**
Attribution-success/locus	.116	.234**	.240**	.342***
Attribution-failure/locus	-.163*	.045	.038	-.099
Attribution-success-stability	.166*	.311***	.218**	.437***
Attribution-failure-stability	-.163*	.078	.017	-.076

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Support received during the training post revealed an impact on almost every motivational variables considered. Thus, if during this period the supervisor provides an effective and consistent support, the training can empower a functional motivational pattern in the beginning teacher, increasing his/her intrinsic motivation,

value assigned to occupational goals, control, efficacy and success expectancies, internal and stable success attributions.

This functional motivational pattern, corresponding to a greater commitment and to a deeper need of career development, is strongly related to a relational model of training in which the teaching/learning process is conceived as a context promoting the development of self-knowledge and of important personal and interpersonal skills. This relational model stresses the learning and developmental dimension of the career construction process, thus creating a training context that contributes to the decrease of the occupational stress that frequently characterizes these early career stages.

Nevertheless, the intensity of the motivation towards teaching (conceived as an ideal or a life project formulated prior to higher education, which is in turn seen as an means to reach the desired goal) is a very important variable as it impacts on almost every other motivational variable. In fact, a higher motivation towards teaching enhances control, efficacy and success expectancies and increases the value of goals, as well as intrinsic motivation and occupational commitment. It also contributes to the development of more positive and self-relying strategies manifesting in internal success attributions and less internal and stable failure attributions. All in all, a higher motivation towards teaching seems to be the most influential variable upon the actual occupational project of the beginning teacher.

The work results also impact on almost every criterion variable, namely the occupational commitment, which is stronger the higher the occupational success. In general, the results obtained stress the importance of both the educational training process and the support received in the training post to the formation of functional occupational expectancies promoting an effective teaching/learning process, in which there is an articulation between the goals, the means and the results, and a constructive career developmental path.

MAIN IMPLICATIONS

It seems important to implement specific motivational strategies during teachers' educational and occupational training, capable of promoting a significant decrease in the frequence and intensity of "reality schock" situations during early career stages, besides the strengthening of socio-political measures, such as, improving the social value of teaching in the mass media, enhancing the social participation in the educational process, increasing the finantial investment in schooling and defining a consistent teacher profile (Jesus, 1995a; Jesus, Abreu, Esteve & Lens, s/d).

According to the data, initial teacher training should follow a relational model (Jesus, 1995b; Jesus, s/d; Jesus, Abreu & Esteve, 1995), capable of identifying and developing the personal skills relevant to an effective and personalized occupational practice. In the educational training prior to the beginning of the occupational practice this model should be able to clarify implicit theories and irrational beliefs and to promote the formation of realistic expectations about teaching. In the training of practical skills it should stimulate frequent problem solving and decision making simulation exercices.

The support provided to the new teacher within the school context is clearly central to the structuration of functional motivational patterns. The training supervisor, besides helping in the planning of classes and in the pupils' evaluation, should be able to promote the learning processes and the career development of the new teacher, via cognitive, emotional and behavioral support. The supervisor should be able to favour in his/her

supervisee an adequate expectation and attribution process management, enhancing self-development throughout the career path.

The initial training period is certainly the most important and "imprinting" in the teachers' career path, creating an objective and subjective situation which is central to the construction of the occupational identity and to the definition of a personal learning style. A perceived "failure" occurring during this period frequently leads to feelings of self-depreciation , whereas the same "failure" a few years later will certainly be experienced as just an exception (Cavaco, 1993). Besides, once it is the only stage within the career path where supervision is provided it is important to build an effective and personalized support net around the new teacher.

Vocational guidance and counseling during higher education is also an important career development strategy that should be able to impact on the initial motivation of future teachers, preventing the "break out" of a behavioral crisis translating the "reality schock". In this context, we recommend the following strategies (Paixão, 1996):

- The creation of Information and Vocational Counseling Centers in higher education institutions, where students can receive help in the psychological processment of career information and in the flexible construction of their projects' elaboration, implementation and evaluation;

- The development of anticipatory coping strategies (work with action plans, fantasies, scripts, reconstruction of past events, future autobiographies, etc.), enabling students to anticipate future outcomes of their present behaviors and value their long term consequences and preventing them from being trapped in consuming individual dilemmas (both individual traps and individual fences);

- The reinforcement of dynamic and systemic career intervention strategies, such as the career style assessment process and the career roles interrelation analysis, that favour a flexible and adapted long term planning behavior;

- A better articulation between the theoretical and the practical dimensions of the educational training of future teachers, during the total time they attend the higher education institution; this constant interchange between these two training dimensions will probably activate deeper career exploratory behaviors and, hence, facilitate risk in decision taking and a considerable increase in the students' self esteem;

- A better institutional and functional articulation between information and vocational guidance strucutures, on one side, and educational training models, on the other, in what concers the students' development of specific personal and interpersonal skills in the areas of ambiguous tasks and conflicts management, thus contributing to the definition of an occupational profile more adapted to the demands of the real school contexts they are later faced with.

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